

Episode 227 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 02 - Velleius Begins His Attack On Traditional Views Of The Gods

Post by "Little Rocker" of June 10, 2024 at 7:23 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Under this perspective it would be wrong to ever consider "a prolepsis" to be an idea or a conclusion of any kind. That's where i think we implement Epicurus' observation that the opinions of the hoi polloi about the gods are not true, and are indeed false, even though they are about a subject in which prolepsis is involved. The prolepsis would dispose us to evaluate the subject and consider it important, but the prolepsis would not provide the correct conclusion -- conclusions occur only in the mind.

I can see the benefits of your approach, but I wonder whether Epicurus builds a bit more content into the prolepsis than that. It seems to me like the prolepsis for the gods in Letter to Menoecus 123-4 is that 1) they exist and that 2) they are 'blessed and indestructible,' which offers at least some kind of skeletal conceptual structure.

And then it might be that the way 'the many'/hoi polloi go wrong is in their understanding of what 'blessed and indestructible' entail. But I admit that the more I look at this sentence, the more my eyes cross:

Quote

'For the pronouncements of the many about the gods are not basic grasps but false suppositions.'

οὐ γὰρ προλήψεις εἰσὶν ἀλλ' ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς αἱ τῶν πολλῶν ὑπὲρ θεῶν ἀποφάσεις.

On one reading, Epicurus might think *his* pronouncements about the gods are 'basic grasps' (prolepseis), which would give the prolepsis *a lot* of argumentative content. On another reading, he's just offering 'true suppositions' about a 'basic grasp' he shares with the many, who instead offer 'false suppositions' about that prolepsis.